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SUBJECT: (U) SECRETARY RICE'S FEBRUARY 17 MEETING WITH
FORMER PM ALLAWI

¶1. (U) Classified by: Arnold Chacon, Deputy Executive
Secretary, S/ES, Department of State. Reason 1.4.(d)

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¶2. (U) February 17, 2007; 12:30; Baghdad, Iraq.

¶3. (U) Participants:

U.S.
The Secretary
Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad
S/I David Satterfield
Shayna Steinger (Embassy Notetaker)

IRAQ
Former Prime Minister Ayad Allawi
Adnan Pachachi

¶4. (S) SUMMARY. In a February 17 meeting at the Embassy, the Secretary urged former Prime Minister and head of centrist Iraqiyya party Ayad Allawi to reenter Iraqi politics in an active manner. She called on Allawi to play a hands-on role in achieving a consensus on urgent national reconciliation goals, particularly de-baathification reform, hydrocarbons, and provincial elections legislation. The former PM shared his views on the current political and security situation, suggesting the United States engage regional friends to help contain Syrian and Iranian intervention and calling for a "rebalancing" of political forces in Iraq. END SUMMARY.

¶5. (S) Invited by the Secretary to share his perspective on the situation in Iraq, former PM Ayad Allawi expressed support for the Baghdad surge strategy, but shared his view that its success would ultimately be determined by "regional elements." For the surge to succeed, Allawi advised the Secretary to enlist Arab states in containing Iranian and Syrian influence.

¶6. (S) The Secretary explained that the United States is indeed working to engage the Gulf states, Jordan, and Egypt in supporting Iraq, but stressed that without internal reconciliation, what happens outside Iraq will

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not matter. As leader of the moderate secular party Iraqiyya, the Secretary urged Allawi to actively reenter Iraqi politics: saying, "What the Iraqis need right now is your hands-on, everyday presence."

¶7. (S) Allawi assured the Secretary that he was "here to

stay." He said a rebalancing of political forces inside Iraq was needed to reverse the spread of sectarianism and the institutionalization of militias, and changes in the cabinet to address incompetence and corruption.

Prominent, absentee Iraqiyya CoR member, Adnan Pachachi, who accompanied Allawi, commented that current thinking within Iraqiyya was toward forming a broad, centrist coalition offering Iraqis an alternative to sectarian and religious-base parties. The Secretary strongly urged both interlocutors to bring the center to bear in achieving the key political priorities of deebathification reform, hydrocarbon, and provincial election laws and constitutional review.

¶18. (S) Pachachi asked what follows if security is achieved in Baghdad. "The point of the Baghdad security plan is not so the U.S. can get out," replied the Secretary, "We will be here" continuing to work closely

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with the Iraqi security forces and support the government. Once a sense of security for the population has returned to the capital, economic reconstruction and governance efforts should be extended to the provincial and local levels. The Secretary pointed out that democracy in a country as large as Iraq could not be run from the center but would require competent provincial and local leadership.

¶19. (S) The Secretary emphasized the United States remained committed to Iraq, but also made clear that progress on key political priorities was urgent given U.S. domestic impatience with Iraqi-on-Iraqi violence and the inability to reach political compromises. The Secretary encouraged Allawi to waste no time in helping achieve national reconciliation. "The time is now," she said, "Your country needs you."

RICE